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SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST TURKEY PRESS SUMMARY FOR MARCH 30, 2005

This is the Southeastern Turkey press summary for March 30, 2005. Please note that Turkish press reports often contain errors or exaggerations; AmConsulate Adana does not vouch for the accuracy of the reports summarized here.

POLITICAL, SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS

ZAMAN / OZGUR GUNDEM: The concluding remarks at the end of the First Alevi Conference in Ankara announced a campaign to do away with the state's mandatory religious instruction. The campaign will start in April and continue until September 12.

ZAMAN: According to Zaman, the recent attempt to burn the Turkish flag in Mersin caused tension between different groups, manifested most strongly in universities. Hostility arose between ultra-nationalist students and members of the PKK youth centers in Marmara University, for example, and university administrators had to call in police as a preemptive measure.

HURRIYET (CUKUROVA) / OZGUR GUNDEM: Harun Kaygu, a fourteen-year-old child, died as he played with a mortar shell that he found on an open field close to a military training zone in Geneyik village of Gaziantep. Likewise, two children died in 1998 due to ammunition related blasts in the same place and families have complained about military trainings being conducted so close to human settlements.

EKSPRES / BOLGE / EVRENSEL / OZGUR GUNDEM: DISK (Confederation of Revolutionary Workers Unions), KESK (Confederation of Public Sector Employees Unions), Turk-Is (Turkish Labour Union), TMMOB (Turkish Union of Chambers of Architects and Engineers) and TTB (Turkish Medical Association) are planning to stage a mass rally on April 3 in Adana against the privatization of various state enterprises such as TEKEL (State Tobacco Enterprise), SEKA (State Paper Mill Enterprise), hospitals, village services offices, and enterprises related with transportation, communication, and energy.

CUMHURİYET / OZGUR GUNDEM: Mehmet Agar, DYP (True Path Party) leader, has been traveling in southeastern Turkey and delivering political messages in many provinces. Today, Agar was at DYP's Provincial Congress in Mardin. A day ago in Diyarbakir, Agar bid farewell in Kurdish, which reminded many people of the trial that Tuncer Bakirhan, DEHAP (Democratic People's Party) leader, was subjected to for bidding a Kurdish farewell to a crowd prior to March 2004 local elections. Bakirhan had reportedly been charged with violating the Political Party Act that bans non-Turkish languages during party activities, but was eventually acquitted for a lack of evidence of having made a Kurdish address, since he only bid farewell.

OZGUR GUNDEM: Alaattin Erdogan, the head of the DEHAP delegation sent to Mersin to investigate the flag-insult incident, rejected claims that he showed disrespect to the Turkish flag in 1998 (see 03/29 press summary). According to Erdogan, the case was allegedly a plot fabricated by the officials against him.

BOLGE: Asuleyman Akkapulu, a fifty-five-year veteran of the CHP (Republican People's Party) in Adana, said that CHP has actually been a long-suffering institution that has come to an end in practice today in Adana. Criticizing the recent toppling of the provincial party administration, Akkapulu stated that the Provincial Chairman should also have been blamed if things had been going wrong within the party administration.

BOLGE: Bolge reports that a power transition in Adana's CHP was underway after the reshuffling of the party administration here. Claiming that Adana CHP MP Ugur Aksoz was engineering this change from Ankara, the report says everyone is struggling to win a position, and waiting anxiously to learn the names of the new party administration members. Of particular interest is the answer to the question: "Who will assign whom?"

EVRENSEL: Evrensel quotes from an article by well-known Milliyet journalist Guneri Civaoglu, who paid a visit to the Incirlik Airbase in Adana and described his observations there. According to Evrensel, the Turkish media is extending support to the U.S. by backing its requests regarding the use of the Airbase. Meanwhile, the U.S. has (allegedly) been intensifying pressure on the Turkish government by bringing forth the following two unsolved issues: the recognition of the Orthodox Patriarch as Ecumenical, and the recognition of April 24 as the Armenian commemoration day.

EVRENSEL: As time for the verdict approaches in the appeal of

Abdullah Ocalan at the European Court of Human Rights, the issue of granting a retrial to Ocalan was reportedly discussed in the meeting of the Council of Ministers the day before.

BOLGE / EKSPRES: Adana AKP MP Abdullah Torun denied IHA news agency's allegation that Torun was not welcomed by the public during his visits around Adana with Yuregir Mayor Omer Topcu on March 29. Torun described IHA's reporting as false and baseless. Today, Ekspres reads that Yuregir has benefited greatly from Torun's outstanding performance in his office and the paper outlines his merits.

REID